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Immensee

Theodor Storm

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IMMENSEE

BY

THEODOR STORM

TRANSLATED BY BERTHA M. SCHIMMELFENNIG

NEW YORK
THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.
PUBLISHERS

1452

A. 288820

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PREFACE.[1]

Not only is "Immensee" the story by which Theodor Storm achieved his first great success, but it is still the one by which he is best known to the reading public. It appeared in 1854 in the form of a pretty booklet and was so thoroughly appreciated that in 1888 it had reached its thirty-first edition.

Its author was born in the year 1817, in Husum, "The gray city by the sea," to which his muse pays tribute, and that, as he tells us, he loved so well. For generations it had been the home of his mother's people, and here stood the venerable Storm house of which our author gives us so many a glimpse in his minute and almost loving descriptions of the homes where dwell the old people he delights to portray, that the careful reader can almost reconstruct it in imagination.

In the houses of these old North German families there are not wont to be sudden changes, but one long-lived generation slips away and is replaced by another without any rude upsetting of time-honored customs and surroundings. Family traditions are as carefully preserved and handed down as are the caskets and chests that hold the jewels and bridal gown of some old ancestress. Each generation is familiar with the deeds and events of the one before it, and the son not only knows his father's

[1] For the literary estimate in the following, Erich Schmidt in "Charakteristiken" is the chief authority.

life story and tells it to his son in turn, but the great events and small, the wise sayings and the merry, of each one are remembered and told. And so it comes that here a picture and a name are not, as is so often the case elsewhere, all that remain of these old ancestors, for they live in the memory of the men and women of to-day. In the ancient rooms where ancestral furniture stands in inoffensive proximity to that of modern design, the spirits of by-gone generations seem still to linger and make their influence for piety and loyalty felt through the stories and pictures that these old heirlooms recall in the minds of the thoughtful who gaze upon them.

As this brief allusion to family tradition may be conducive to a better understanding and appreciation of the author and his work, so also may a few events of his life. His higher education, begun at the "Gymnasium" at Luebeck, was completed at the universities of Kiel and Berlin. The law was his chosen profession, as it was that of his father, and he practised it with gratifying success for the greater part of his long life. His career as a lawyer in his native town was, however, early brought to a close by the long and at last active struggle that the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein waged against the galling oppression of the Dane, a struggle in which Storm was no lukewarm partisan. As a result he felt constrained to leave the home of his childhood, and did not return to it until it had become a part of the kingdom of Prussia. Then, abandoning the judicial position he held under the Prussian government, he took up his abode in his beloved Husum again, where he remained until 1880, when he bade farewell to it and his public career and retired to the little village of Hademarschen, in Holstein. Here, at the age of sixty-three, he founded

a new home, and with the enthusiasm of youth looked forward to many years of life in it, years in which no exacting demands of government service would interfere with his entire devotion to his chosen muse; and here, in 1888, he was laid at rest.

His marriage with the woman of his choice, a lady as lovable as she was beautiful, insured to him a happy wedded life, which in time was blessed by both sons and daughters.

It is not in his own love life, therefore, but rather in the bitter disappointments he suffered through his ardent but unrequited devotion to his country's long unsuccessful cause that we must seek the reason for that strain of gentle resignation, as well as heartfelt sympathy with unsatisfied love, that is so marked a feature in a large group of his writings, notably the earlier ones, and of which "Immensee" is typical. In them the old theme of "to have loved and lost" is sounded in many and touching variations, and, as our author's method is preferably that of retrospection, we meet his heroes and heroines in the evening of life when, from the standpoint of an achieved aim, which is seldom the one set in the first flush of youth, the disappointments and passion of life appear in a subdued and mellow light to the clarified vision of age.

Storm is past master in the art of portraying by a few suggestive incidents or pictures, leaving much to the imagination of the reader; but, although the execution is meagre, he has in a rare degree the power of making us feel rather than hear the life-story he depicts. In his presentation of the kindly old people, which is a necessary part of the retrospective method, he is unsurpassed. In "Immensee" all the long-lost youth of the old savant

returns to him in his reverie, and we share it with him in the successive sketches that the author gives us of it, always with a lapse of years between. "Again years had passed" is a phrase we often meet in his stories.

But that Storm can also write in merrier mood no one will dispute who has read his humorous little sketch "When Apples are Ripe," or "The Little Häwelmann," or his poem about the nine-and-forty kittens.

In but one instance does Storm take his readers beyond the confines of his native Germany; the people we meet in his stories are those he saw about him in his every-day life, and with careful realism he surrounds them with their own atmosphere, and almost lovingly pictures for us the homes in which they move and have their being, wherein he not infrequently reminds us of Dickens. From the house he takes us into the garden, old-fashioned and stiff, or more according to modern ideas which give both people and plants greater freedom; from the garden he conducts us to the fields and woods where, with his great love of nature, he sees and hears even in the meagrest surroundings that which his masterly descriptions compel us to appreciate and enjoy.

During his last years our author developed a power of which his earlier stories give no hint; the tone of melancholy resignation disappears more and more, and his characters show the spirit that masters fate, or breaks in the striving. He now reveals to us the darker side of life which, up to this time, he carefully spared the reader. Of this group, "Aqua Submersus" is the most noteworthy example, and, as in others of this class, the scene is laid in an earlier century; to picture correctly these remoter times and customs the author changed his style entirely.

In our appreciation of Storm as a prose writer we must not, as the reading public is too much inclined to do, forget to pay tribute to his great merits as a poet. His verse is among the most delightful and noble that German literature has produced since the days of Goethe, and although the minor tones that pervade so many of his stories are often heard here too, they are not so general and the themes are more varied. All the tender notes of love as well as the grander strains of patriotism he voices as do few others, for, upright in his art as in his life, his poems give utterance only to that which he himself has felt and experienced, and so stand as a living testimony of his inner life.

HELENE SCHIMMELFENNIG WHITE.

APRIL, 1902.

IMMENSEE.

I.

THE OLD MAN.

On the afternoon of a day late in autumn a well-dressed old gentleman might have been seen slowly coming down the street. He was evidently returning from a long walk, for his shoes, whose broad buckles proclaimed them of a bygone fashion, were covered with dust, and a long, gold-headed walking-stick of bamboo was thrust under one arm. His dark eyes, into which all his long-lost youth seemed to have taken refuge, and which contrasted strangely with his snowy hair, rested with quiet interest upon the objects about him, or wandered to the town that lay before him in the golden haze of sunset. He seemed to be almost a stranger, for but few of the passers-by exchanged greetings with him, although the dark, grave eyes compelled the gaze of most of them.

At last he stopped before a high gabled house, and after another glance toward the town beyond stepped upon the threshold. At the sound of the door-bell some one within drew aside the green curtain from a little window that gave a view of the door, and the face of an old woman appeared. The old man beckoned to her with his cane, and instantly the curtain dropped back into place.

"No lights yet?" he said in a slightly southern accent as the housekeeper opened the door for him.

Passing through the wide vestibule, the old man entered a broad hall where tall cases of heavy oak on which stood porcelain vases lined the walls; through a door opposite he stepped into a smaller hall from which a narrow flight of stairs led up to the rooms in the back part of the house. Slowly he mounted these and on arriving at the top unlocked a door which brought him into a room of moderate size. It was a quiet, cosy place; one wall was almost entirely occupied by book and curio cases; on another hung many pictures of places and people; there was a table with a green cover, and on it lay a number of open books, while beside it stood a great armchair with red velvet cushions.

After the old man had set his hat and cane in one corner of the room, he seated himself in the chair, and folding his hands, seemed to be resting from the exertion of his walk. As he sat thus it gradually grew dark; after a while the moonlight stole in at one of the windows and fell upon the pictures on the opposite wall; as the pale band of light crept slowly onward the old man's eyes involuntarily followed. Now it touched a small portrait in a plain black frame. "Elisabeth," said the old man softly, and as he spoke the word, all seemed changed; his youth had returned to him.

II.

THE CHILDREN.

Soon a dainty little maid came tripping up to him. Her name was Elisabeth. She was about five years old; he himself was just twice that age. About her throat was knotted a red silk kerchief which was very becoming to her with her dark brown eyes.

"Reinhard!" she cried, "we 've a holiday, a holiday! No school all day, nor to-morrow either!"

Reinhard quickly took his slate from under his arm and set it down behind the door; then the two children ran out of the house into the garden and through the gate into the meadow beyond. This unexpected holiday was a most delightful surprise to them.

With Elisabeth's help Reinhard had built a house of turf out here; they meant to live in it during the long summer evenings, but as yet there was no seat in it. Reinhard now set to work at once to make a bench, for the boards, nails, and hammer were already there. Meanwhile Elisabeth wandered along the embankment gathering the round, flat seeds of the wild mallow into her little apron; she was going to make necklaces and bracelets for herself out of them. And so, when Reinhard had at last finished his bench in spite of many a crookedly driven nail, and stepped out into the bright sunshine, the little maid was far away at the other end of the meadow.

"Elisabeth!" he called. "Elisabeth!"

Then she came running back, her curls blowing in the wind.

"Come," said he, "our house is done. Why, how hot you are! Come in; we will try our new bench and I will tell you a story."

Then the two children went in and sat down on the new bench. Elisabeth took her little mallow rings out of her apron and strung them on long threads. Reinhard began his story: —

"Once upon a time there were three old spinning-women" —

"Oh," said Elisabeth, "I know that one by heart. You must n't tell the same stories over and over again."

And so Reinhard had to give up the story of the three old spinning-women, and instead, he told about the unfortunate man who was cast into the lions' den. "And now the night had come on," he was saying; "it was awfully dark, don't you know, and the lions were asleep. But now and then they yawned in their sleep and showed their red tongues; then the poor man shuddered and thought the morning was near. All at once a bright light fell on him, and when he looked up he saw an angel standing before him. The angel beckoned him to follow, and then went straight into the rocks."

Elisabeth had listened very attentively. "An angel?" she said. "And did it have wings?"

"Oh, it is only a story," was Reinhard's answer; "for of course there are no angels."

"Oh, fie, Reinhard!" she cried, and looked defiantly up at him. But when he frowned back at her, she asked a little doubtfully: "Why, then, do they always tell us about them — mother and aunty, and at school, too?"

"I don't know," was his answer.

"But, Reinhard," said Elisabeth, "are there, then, no real lions, either?"

"Lions? Real lions? Oh, yes; in India. There the priests of the idol-worshippers harness them to their chariots and drive through the desert with them. Some day when I am grown up I am going there. It is a thousand times more beautiful there than it is here at home; there is no winter there. You must go with me. Will you?"

"Yes," said Elisabeth, "but mother must go with us, and your mother, too."

"No," said Reinhard; "they will be too old by that time; they can't go."

"But I can't go alone."

"Oh, yes, you can; you will really be my wife by that time, and then the others will have nothing to say about it."

"But mother will cry."

"Oh, we shall come back," said Reinhard, impatiently. "Now tell me, will you go with me? If not, I shall go alone, but then I shall never come back."

The little girl was ready to cry. "Don't look at me so angrily," she said; "I will go with you to India."

Reinhard caught her hands in boisterous glee and ran out into the meadow with her. "To India! To India!" he sang, and whirled her about with him until her little red kerchief became untied and fluttered from her neck. Suddenly he dropped her hands and said very gravely: "Nothing will come of it, after all; you have n't courage enough."

"Elisabeth! Reinhard!" called a voice from the garden.

"Here! Here!" answered the children, and hand in hand they went running home.

III.

IN THE WOODS.

Thus the two children lived together. She was often too quiet for his taste, he was often too quick-tempered for her; but they held to each other nevertheless. All their play-time was spent together — during the winter in the narrow rooms of their mothers, during the summer in wood and field.

Once when the schoolmaster found fault with Elisabeth in Reinhard's presence, the boy struck his slate angrily against his desk with the intention of diverting the master's attention to himself. It was not noticed, however; but Reinhard had lost all interest in the geography lesson, and instead, wrote a long poem in which he represented himself as a young eagle, the schoolmaster as a black crow, and Elisabeth as a white dove; the eagle vowed to take vengeance upon the black crow as soon as his wings had grown strong enough. Tears filled the young poet's eyes; he felt quite exalted. When he got home he managed to procure a small parchment folio in which there were many white pages; on the first of these he carefully penned his first poem.

Soon afterward he was advanced to a higher school where he formed many new friendships with boys of his own age; but he did not allow this to estrange him from Elisabeth. Of the many fairy tales he had told and retold her he now began to write down those that pleased her most; while doing so he often felt

a desire to weave in some thoughts of his own, but somehow, he knew not why, he never got to it. And so he wrote them just as he himself had heard them. He gave the sheets to Elisabeth, who laid them carefully away in the drawer of her little writing desk. If it so happened that Reinhard was present on an evening when Elisabeth read some of these stories aloud to her mother from the pages he had written, it was a great delight to him.

Seven years had passed. Reinhard was to leave his home to continue his studies elsewhere. Elisabeth could not get used to the thought that soon there were to be days that must be passed without Reinhard. She was glad when one day he told her that he would continue to write down stories for her as usual, and that he would enclose them in his letters to his mother; but, he added, he would expect her to write and tell him how she liked them.

The day of Reinhard's departure drew rapidly nearer; before it arrived, however, many a new poem was written in the folio. The little book and its contents formed the only secret he kept from Elisabeth, although she herself had inspired the thought of it as well as most of the poems that gradually came to fill more than half of its white pages.

It was now June, and on the morrow Reinhard was to leave his home. This last day was to be one of pleasant companionship with old friends, and a picnic in a wood near by had been planned. An hour's ride brought the merry company to the edge of the woods; here all alighted, and the lunch baskets were taken out of the carriages, for the rest of the way was to be made on foot. The road first led through a pine grove where a cool twilight reigned and the ground was soft with a carpet

of fine pine-needles. After a half-hour's walk they emerged from the shadowy gloom of the pine trees into the fresh green of a beech wood; here all was light and sunshine, for many a sunbeam found its way through the leafy branches overhead among which a squirrel was leaping merrily.

The company selected a place under a group of tall and ancient beech trees whose great branches interlaced to form a leafy roof through which the sunlight glinted. Elisabeth's mother opened one of the baskets; an old gentleman assumed the office of quartermaster. "Here, all you young people," he cried, "stand around and listen well to what I have to say. For breakfast each of you is now to have two unbuttered rolls, for the butter was left at home; the sauce every one must get for himself. There are plenty of strawberries in the woods — that is, for all who know how to find them; those who are not smart will have to eat their bread without sauce, that is the way the world over. Have you caught my meaning?"

"Yes, indeed!" shouted the young people.

"Very good!" continued the old man. "But stop! I have not finished. We old folks have had our share of roaming about the world; so we will stay at home, that is, here, under these shady trees; meanwhile we will pare the potatoes, kindle the fire, and set the table, and at noon we 'll not forget to boil the eggs. In return for all this we shall claim half of all the strawberries you gather, so that we may have a dessert to serve with our dinner. And now, away with you, to the east and to the west, and deal honestly with us!"

There was many an amused or roguish glance exchanged between the young people.

"Hold on!" cried the old gentleman again. "Perhaps I need hardly tell you that those of you who find no berries need deliver none. But mark me well; he who brings nothing must expect nothing from the old folks. There! Now you've had good advice enough for one day, and if you get berries to go with it, you'll do very well for to-day."

The young people fully agreed with him, and at once set off in couples for the woods.

"Come, Elisabeth," said Reinhard, "I know where there are plenty of berries; you shall not have to eat your bread dry."

Elisabeth tied the ribbon strings of her hat together and hung it on her arm.

"Let's be off, then," said she; "the basket is ready."

Then the two went into the woods, farther and farther; under tall trees where the shadows lay deep, and it was damp and cool and still save for the harsh cry of the falcons in the air high overhead; then through close, tangled brush so dense that Reinhard had to go ahead to break a path, drawing a vine aside here, snapping a twig that was all too forward yonder. They had not gone far before he heard Elisabeth calling him. He turned.

"Reinhard! Reinhard! wait for me!" she cried.

The boy looked, but he could not see her. At last he discovered her some distance behind him struggling with the brambles, her dainty head just visible above the tops of some tall brakes. So he turned back and brought her safely through the tangle of weeds and briars to an open space where blue butterflies fluttered above the few lonely blossoms of the woods.

Reinhard brushed the moist ringlets back from her hot forehead; then he wanted to tie her hat on for her, but

she would not allow it; but when he pleaded with her, she gave her consent after all.

"Where are the strawberries?" she asked at last, as she stood still to take a long breath.

"Here is where they were," said he, "but the toads have been here before us, I fear, or the martins, or, perhaps, the elves."

"Yes," said Elisabeth, "I see the leaves yonder. But do not speak of elves here. Come, let us go on; I am not at all tired, and we will look farther."

Before them rippled a little brook; beyond it the woods began again. Reinhard took Elisabeth in his arms and carried her across. By and by they left the leafy shade behind them and found themselves in a wide clearing.

"There must be strawberries here," said the little girl, "the air is sweet with them."

They went searching through all the sunlit space, but they found none. "No," said Reinhard, "it is only the fragrance of the blossoming heath."

Everywhere tall holly and raspberry bushes grew in tangled masses, the air was heavy with the sweet odor of the heath that, together with the short thick grass, covered every open space between the bushes.

"It is very lonely here," said Elisabeth. "I wonder where the others are."

Reinhard had not given the homeward way a thought.

"Wait a minute; which way is the wind?" said he, as he held up one hand. But there was no wind.

"Hark!" said Elisabeth, "I think I hear voices. Call in that direction."

Reinhard raised his hands to his mouth and shouted: "Come this way!" And "This way" came a faint reply.

"They are answering," cried Elisabeth, and clapped her hands with joy.

"No, it was nobody; only the echo."

Elisabeth slipped her hand into Reinhard's. "I'm afraid," she said.

"Oh, no! you must n't be," said the boy. "It is lovely here. Sit down on the grass over yonder in the shade, and let us rest awhile; we'll find the others easily enough."

Elisabeth seated herself under the overhanging bough of a tall beech tree and listened eagerly in every direction. Reinhard sat a few paces off on the fallen trunk of a tree and looked at her in silence. The sun was in the zenith; the air was aglow with the heat of noon; tiny, glittering, steel-blue flies hung motionless in the air on quivering wing; from all around came a soft whirr and buzz, with now and then the sound of a woodpecker's hammering, or the cry of a wild bird from the deeper shade of the woods beyond.

"Hark," said Elisabeth, "I hear bells."

"Where?" asked Reinhard.

"Behind us. Don't you hear them? It is twelve o'clock."

"Then the town is over yonder, and if we go straight ahead in this direction we must come upon the others."

The homeward way was now begun; they had given up their search for strawberries, for Elisabeth was tired. At length they heard the sound of laughter from beyond a group of trees just ahead of them; then they saw the gleam of a white cloth that was spread upon the grass; it was the dinner-table, and on it were strawberries in abundance. The old gentleman had a napkin tucked in his button-hole, and while he was energetically carving

a roast, found time to continue his moral lecture of the morning.

"There are the tardy ones!" cried some of the young people when they caught sight of Reinhard and Elisabeth coming from among the more distant trees.

"This way!" shouted the old gentleman. "Empty your bags and turn out what's in your hats, and let us see what you've brought back."

"Only a good appetite and thirst," said Reinhard.

"If that is all, you may keep them," was the old man's reply as he pointed to the well-filled dish of berries. "You know the usual notice: 'No idlers fed here.'"

But after some pleading he relented, and the merry dinner was begun while a thrush sang his sweet song in the bough of a spruce tree not far away.

So the happy day passed, and although Reinhard had found no strawberries, he had after all brought something back with him, something that he had found in the woods. That evening he got out his old parchment folio and on one of its pages wrote:

Here in the shady valley
The wind forgets to blow;
Above, the leaves hang idly,
The wee maid sits below.

In bed of thyme she sits there,
She sits in fragrance rare;
The blue flies buzz around her,
Their wings flash through the air.

The wood stands wrapt in silence,
'T is there her wise eyes rest;
But 't is her soft brown ringlets
The sunbeams love the best.

The cuckoo's call sounds distant —
The thought steals over me:
"Her wide eyes, brown and golden,
The wood-nymph's eyes must be."

And so Elisabeth was not only his little protegée, but she had come to be to him the embodiment of all that was sweet and mysterious in his expanding young life.

IV.

WHEN LO! THE CHILD STOOD BY HIM.

It was Christmas eve. Late in the afternoon Reinhard, with some fellow-students, was sitting at an old oak table in the Ratskeller.[1] The lamps along the walls were lighted, for down here the twilight came early; there were but few guests, and the waiters were leaning idly against the brick pillars. In one corner of the great vaulted room sat a fiddler and a zither-player, a young girl with a delicate, gypsy face; their instruments lay in their laps while their eyes wandered listlessly about.

From the table where sat the students came the sound of a popping champagne bottle.

"Drink, my little Bohemian sweetheart!" cried a young man, whose appearance was that of a young nobleman, as he held a brimming glass toward the young girl.

"I don't want it," said she, without changing her position.

"Then sing us a song!" cried the young man, as he tossed a silver coin into her lap. The girl slowly passed her hand over her dark hair, while the fiddler whispered something to her; but she threw back her head and resting her chin on her zither said: —

"No, I 'll not play for him."

With his glass in his hand Reinhard jumped to his feet and stood before the girl.

[1] A public wine-room in the basement or cellar-room of the Rathaus (courthouse). In almost every large German city there is a Ratskeller, especially in the university towns. — TRANSLATOR.

"What do you want?" she asked defiantly.

"To look into your eyes," said he.

"What are my eyes to you?"

With a burning glance Reinhard looked down at her.

"I know well enough they are evil eyes!"

She laid her cheek in the palm of her hand and gave him a watchful glance from under her dark lashes. Reinhard raised his glass to his lips: "To your beautiful, wicked eyes!" he cried, and drank.

She laughed and turned her face toward him. "Give it to me!" she said, and with her black eyes riveted on his, she slowly drained the glass. Then she snatched a chord on her zither and in a low and passionate voice sang:

"So fair of face am I
But a day, a day;
To-morrow, to-morrow
It all fades away.
For only this hour
Art thou mine own;
Too soon I must die,
And die alone."

While the fiddler played a rapid interlude a newcomer joined the little group.

"You had gone when I called for you at your room, Reinhard," he said. "But I found that Christmas had entered there before me."

"Christmas!" said Reinhard. "There is no Christmas for me nowadays."

"Oh, pshaw! Your whole room was filled with the odor of Christmas-trees and brown cakes."

Reinhard set down his glass and took up his cap.

"What now?" asked the girl.

"Oh, I 'm coming back."

She frowned. "Stay!" she said softly, with a familiar glance up at him.

Reinhard hesitated. "I can't," he said.

She laughed and touched him with the tip of her boot as she said: "Go on, then. You 're not worth much; you are none of you good for anything!" and, as she turned away, Reinhard went slowly up the stairs and into the street.

Out of doors it was almost dark; the fresh winter air blew against his hot forehead. Through a window here and there fell the bright light from the burning candles of a Christmas tree, while the sound of little whistles and tin trumpets, mingled with the merry shouts of happy children, reached him now and then. Little bands of begging children went from house to house, or, climbing upon the railing of the stone steps, tried to look through the windows and so get at least a glimpse of all the splendor that was not for them. Occasionally, too, a door was thrown open, and a scolding voice drove the unwelcome little visitors away from the brightly lighted house into the dark street beyond. From within one closed entrance came the familiar air of an old Christmas carol in which clear girlish voices rang out above the others. Reinhard paid no heed to them, but passed quickly on from one street into another.

It had grown quite dark when he reached his lodging-house; he stumbled up the stairs and stepped into his room. A sweet odor greeted him. He felt as though he were at home, for it was the familiar odor that pervaded his mother's rooms at Christmas time. With trembling hand he struck a light; yes, there on the table lay a large package and, as he opened it, out fell the well-

known brown Christmas cakes. A few of them were ornamented with his initials in frosting; none other than Elisabeth could have done that. Then he discovered a smaller package; it contained daintily embroidered linen — neckties, handkerchiefs, and cuffs; last of all he found two letters, one from his mother and one from Elisabeth. Reinhard opened the one from Elisabeth first, and read: —

"The fine frosted letters will tell you well enough who it was that helped with the cakes; the same person embroidered the cuffs for you. This will be a very quiet Christmas for us here at home; mother always sets her spinning-wheel aside as early as half-past nine now; it has been very lonely here this winter without you. And now the linnet you gave me is dead, too; it died last Sunday. I cried bitterly; but I really did take good care of it. The little fellow always sang so merrily in the afternoon when the sun shone on him. Do you remember how mother always hung a cloth over his cage to silence him when he sang so loud? And so the room is more quiet than ever now, except that your old friend, Erich, comes to see us occasionally. You once said that he looked like his brown overcoat; I always think of it when I see him at the door, and it is so funny. But you must n't tell mother, for I think it would displease her.

"Guess what I am going to give your mother for Christmas. You can't guess? Myself! Erich is doing my picture in crayon. I sat three times for him, a whole hour at a time. The thought that a stranger should learn to know my face so well was distasteful to me, and so I refused at first; but mother persuaded me, saying that the picture would be such a pleasure to good Frau Werner.

"But you are not keeping your word, Reinhard; you have sent me no fairy-tales. I have often complained of it to your mother, and she always says that you have too much to do now to spend your time on such childish things. But I don't believe it; there is some other reason, probably."

Then Reinhard read what his mother had written him; when he had finished and had slowly refolded both letters and laid them away, an overwhelming feeling of homesickness seized him. He walked up and down in his room for a long time; after a while he said, almost inaudibly at first, and then half aloud: —

"He almost strayed from duty —
The path could not discern;
When lo! the child stood by him
And bade him homeward turn."

Then he stepped to his desk, took out some money, and went down into the street again. It had grown very quiet there; the lights on the Christmas-trees had burned out, the bands of little beggars were gone. The wind swept through the deserted streets; both old and young were gathered together at home in family groups; the second half of the Christmas-eve festivities had begun.

As Reinhard approached the Ratskeller there came to him from below the scraping sound of the fiddle and the song of the zither-girl; then he heard the tinkle of the little bell on the Ratskeller door, and a dark figure came reeling up the broad, dimly-lighted stairs. Reinhard quickly stepped back into the shadow of a building, and then hurried on. Soon he reached the brightly lighted window of a jewelry store; he entered, and after

he had purchased a small cross ornamented with red coral, he went back by the same way he had come.

Not far from home he noticed a little girl in pitiful rags standing in the shadow of a great door, vainly endeavoring to open it.

"Shall I help you?" asked Reinhard.

The child made no reply, but let her hand slip from the heavy door-knob. Reinhard had already opened the door for her when he said: —

"No, they may drive you away. Come with me, I will give you some Christmas cakes."

After closing the door he took the little girl by the hand and walked on with her in silence until he stood before his own door. He had left the light burning when he went out.

"Here are cakes for you," he said, as he filled the child's apron with the half of all his store, but among them there was not one of those that bore the frosted letters. "Now run home and give your mother some of them."

The child looked up at him with a timid glance; she was evidently unused to such kindness, and at a loss to know what to say in reply. Reinhard opened the door and held his lamp to light the way for her; and now the little one flew downstairs and was off with her cakes like a bird.

Reinhard stirred the fire in his stove and set his dusty inkstand on the table; then he sat down and wrote and wrote, the whole night long, letters to his mother and Elisabeth. The rest of his Christmas cakes lay untouched before him, but the cuffs that Elisabeth had embroidered he had slipped on his wrists, although they looked oddly enough with his white woolly house-jacket.

And so he was still sitting when the first rays of the tardy winter sun fell through the frosty window-panes and revealed to him a pale and serious face in the mirror opposite.

V.

AT HOME.

At Easter-time Reinhard went home. The morning after his arrival found him at Elisabeth's door.

"How tall you have grown," he said, as the lovely, slender girl met him with a happy smile. She blushed, but made no reply; the hand that she had given him in greeting she sought gently to withdraw. He looked at her questioningly, for this had not been her way before; it seemed to him that a strangeness had come between them.

And so it remained even after he had been at home for some time and had spent day after day with her. When they were alone together, a silence often fell between them which was painful to Reinhard and which he anxiously sought to avoid. And so, for the sake of having an ever-ready topic of conversation during these holidays, he began to give Elisabeth lessons in botany, a study to which he had devoted much time during his first months at the university. Elisabeth, who was used to follow where he led, and besides was always glad to learn, readily agreed to this plan. After that, on several mornings of each week, there were botanizing expeditions out into the woods and fields, and if at noon the two returned with their green tin case well filled with plants and flowers, Reinhard came again in the afternoon to divide with Elisabeth their common store.

It was with this in mind that he stepped into the room one afternoon and found Elisabeth standing at the window fastening chickweed on a gilded cage he had not seen there before. In it was a canary bird that fluttered its wings and gave little shrill cries as it pecked at Elisabeth's finger. It hung in the place where the bird that had been Reinhard's gift had once hung.

"Did my poor little linnet turn into a goldfinch after its death?" he asked merrily.

"That is not the way with linnets," said Elisabeth's mother who was sitting in her armchair spinning. "Your friend Erich sent it to Elisabeth this afternoon from his estate near here."

"From his estate?"

"Don't you know about it?"

"About what?"

"That last week Erich's father made over his second estate, the one on the Immensee,[1] to him."

"But you have not told me a word about it."

"Well," said the mother, "you have not so much as asked a single question about your old friend. He is an unusually good and sensible young man."

Then the mother left the room to prepare the afternoon coffee. Elisabeth's back was turned toward Reinhard, for she was still busily weaving the green chickweed into a leafy bower for her bird.

"Excuse me just a moment," she said; "I have almost finished."

When Reinhard, contrary to his usual way, did not answer, she turned to look at him, and saw in his eyes a sudden look of trouble which she had never seen there before.

[1] Lake of the bees. — TRANSLATOR.

"What is the matter, Reinhard?" she asked, stepping closer to him.

"The matter?" asked Reinhard absently, his eyes looking dreamily into hers.

"You look so sad."

"Elisabeth," said he, "I cannot bear that yellow bird."

She looked at him in surprise; she did not understand him. "You are so strange," she said.

He took both her hands in his, and she made no effort to withdraw them.

The door opened and Elisabeth's mother came into the room. After they had had their coffee she seated herself at her spinning-wheel and Reinhard and Elisabeth went into the adjoining room to arrange their plants. Soon they were busy counting stamens, carefully spreading out flowers and leaves, and, at the end, laying two specimens of each kind between the pages of a great folio to be pressed. It was a quiet sunny afternoon; the only sounds were the whirr of the mother's wheel in the next room and Reinhard's low voice, as from time to time he called the names of the orders and families of the plants, or corrected Elisabeth's faulty pronunciation of the Latin names.

"I still have no specimen of the lily-of-the-valley that I did not get last time," she said when they had completed the sorting and arranging of their plants.

Reinhard took a small white parchment folio from his pocket. "Here is a spray for you," he said, taking a partially pressed specimen out of the book.

When Elisabeth saw the carefully written pages she asked: "Have you been writing stories again?"

"No, they are not stories," was his answer as he handed her the book.

It was full of poems, most of which hardly covered a page. Elisabeth turned leaf after leaf; she seemed to be reading the titles only. "When the schoolmaster reproved her," "When we were lost in the woods," "The Easter story," "Upon receiving her first letter," and so they read on with but few exceptions. Reinhard looked at her eagerly while she continued turning the pages. After a while he saw a soft pink creep slowly upward from her white throat until the sweet face was quite suffused. He wanted to look into her eyes, but Elisabeth would not raise them. At last she laid the book down before him without a word.

"Do not return it to me in that way," he plead.

Elisabeth took a little spray out of the tin case. "I will lay your favorite flower between the pages," she said, and gave the book into his hands.

And now the last day of his vacation had come and with it the morning when Reinhard must go again. Elisabeth had asked her mother's permission to accompany her friend to the station from which the stage-coach started, only a few streets distant from the house. As they stepped out into the street Reinhard offered Elisabeth his arm, and then walked on in silence with the slender girl at his side. The nearer they came to their destination the more he felt that there was something he must say to her before they parted, something upon which depended all that was sweet and worth living for in the life before him; and yet the right word would not come to him. This troubled him and he walked more and more slowly.

"You will be too late," said Elisabeth; "the clock on St. Mary's church has struck ten."

But he did not quicken his steps. At last he stam-

mered forth: "Elisabeth, it will be two long years before you will see me again. I wonder if you will be as fond of me when I come back as you are now."

She nodded and looked at him with a friendly smile. "I defended you, too," she said after a pause.

"Me? Against whom did you have to defend me?" he asked.

"Against mother. Yesterday, after you had gone, we talked a long time about you; she thought you were not as good as you used to be."

For a moment Reinhard did not answer; then he took her hand in his and looking steadfastly into her child-like eyes he said: "I am just as good as I ever was; you may believe me. Do you believe it, Elisabeth?"

"Yes," she said.

He let go her hand and they walked rapidly on through the last streets. With every moment that brought the parting nearer, the expression of his face grew happier; he walked so fast that Elisabeth found it difficult to keep up with him.

"What is the matter, Reinhard?" she asked.

"I have a secret, a beautiful secret," said he, and looked at her with shining eyes. "When I come back, at the end of the two years, I will tell it to you."

They had now reached the station, and were barely in time for the coach. Reinhard took her hand once more. "Farewell," he said; "farewell, Elisabeth, and do not forget what I have said."

She shook her head. "Farewell," she said.

Then Reinhard stepped into the coach and the horses started; as they turned the first corner he caught a last glimpse of the sweet girlish figure that was so dear to him as she walked slowly homeward.

VI.

A LETTER.

Nearly two years had passed. Reinhard was sitting at his desk surrounded by books and papers; he was expecting a friend with whom he had studies in common. A step was heard on the stair: "Come in!" called Reinhard. It was the landlady. "A letter for you, Herr Werner," she said, and withdrew.

Reinhard had not written to Elisabeth since his Easter visit, and had received no letter from her. Nor was this one from her; it bore his mother's handwriting. Reinhard broke the seal and read; soon he came upon the following: —

"At your age, my dear boy, each year opens up its own fair prospects, for youth will not allow itself to be beggared. But here at home there have also been many changes, and one of them, I fear, will grieve you for a while, if I have read you aright. Yesterday Elisabeth at last gave Erich her promise to be his wife, although she has twice refused him in the past three months. She could not, it seems, make up her mind to it; but now she has done so after all. But she is altogether too young, I think. The wedding is to be very soon, and then her mother will live with them."

VII.

IMMENSEE.

Again years had passed. On the afternoon of a warm day in spring a young man was walking along a shady road that led down a wooded hill. His features were strong and bronzed by the sun; his dark earnest eyes searched the distance as though momentarily expecting a change in the monotony of the scene about him, in which, however, he was disappointed. At length he saw a man, walking beside a horse and cart, coming slowly up the hill. "Halloo, my good friend," was the traveller's greeting, "am I on the right way to Immensee?"

"Straight ahead," was the man's reply as he touched his broad-brimmed hat.

"Is it far from here?"

"You are almost there, sir. There's not time to smoke half a pipe full before you'll get sight of the lake, and the house is hard by the shore."

The man went on, and the traveller hurried along under the broad overhanging boughs. After a quarter of an hour's walk the shade on his left came to a sudden end, for here the path led along a declivity so steep that only the tops of the ancient oaks that grew at its base were visible above it. Beyond, a wide and sunny landscape opened to the view. Far below lay the lake, deep blue and calm, surrounded by green, sunlit woods save only at one point where the eye could look far away to the blue hills against the distant horizon. Just opposite,

in the midst of the green forest foliage, the trees were white as with new-fallen snow. These were the blossoming fruit trees, and from among them, high on the lake-shore, rose the house, white, with red-tiled roof. A stork flew up from one of the chimneys and circled slowly above the blue waters of the lake.

"Immensee!" exclaimed the traveller, and it almost seemed as though he had reached his journey's end, for he stood immovable, gazing over the tops of the trees at his feet to the farther shore of the lake, where the stately house lay mirrored in the quiet water. At last, with a sudden start, he continued his way. It led abruptly downward now, so that very soon he was walking in the shade of the trees that had been far below him only a few moments before. At the same time, however, he lost the outlook upon the lake, of which he now only caught a glimpse through the foliage here and there as its waves flashed in the sunlight. But soon his way led upward again, and the woods on either side gave place to vine-clad slopes, while the road ran on between rows of blossoming fruit trees, noisy with the hum of thousands of busy, tumbling bees.

A tall, well-built man in a brown overcoat was coming to meet the traveller; when he had almost reached him he took off his cap, and swinging it in the air cried in a cheery voice: "Welcome, welcome, brother Reinhard! Welcome to Immensee!"

"God bless you, Erich, and thank you for your hearty welcome," replied the other.

Then their hands met in a cordial grasp, and as Erich looked into the grave and quiet face of his old schoolmate, he said: "And is this really you, friend Reinhard?"

"To be sure it is I; and you are the same old Erich except that you look even cheerier than you did in the old days."

At these words a happy smile made Erich's rather plain features look even more cheerful than before.

"Well, brother Reinhard," said he as he pressed his friend's hand once more, "I have reason to be, for I have won a great prize since then, as you know very well." Then rubbing his hands gleefully he cried: "What a surprise it will be! Of all persons in the world, she 'll never expect you."

"A surprise?" asked Reinhard. "For whom?"

"For Elisabeth."

"Elisabeth? You have not told her that I am your expected guest?"

"Not a word, brother Reinhard; you have not so much as entered her mind, nor her mother's either. I kept it all a secret so that the pleasure might be the greater. You know I was always fond of having a quiet little scheme or two of my own."

Reinhard grew thoughful; with every step toward the house his breath seemed to come harder.

On the left of the road the vineyards had now come to an end, and in their place was an extensive vegetable garden that reached almost to the shore of the lake. The stork had alighted and with grave and stately stride was walking about between the rows of vegetables.

"Halloo!" shouted Erich, as he clapped his hands. "Here is that long-legged Egyptian stealing my young peas again!"

The bird rose slowly in the air and flew to the roof of a new building that stood at one end of the vegetable

garden, its walls green with the boughs of peach and apricot trees that were fastened against them.[1]

"That is the distillery," said Erich. "I built it only two years ago. The farm buildings were put up by my father, while the dwelling-house dates from my grandfather's time; so each generation takes a step forward."

With these words the two men had come to an open court enclosed on the sides by the farm buildings, and in the rear by the dwelling-house, from the two wings of which extended the stone walls of the garden; beyond these could be seen the straight, dark lines of evergreen hedges, while here and there a blossoming syringa bush within the garden drooped its heavily laden boughs over into the court-yard. Men with faces heated by sun and labor were going to and fro, and passed the two friends with a respectful greeting, while one or the other of them received an order from the master or was asked a question.

Now the house was reached, and the two men entered a cool, high-studded hall, at the end of which they turned into a somewhat darker side-passage. Here Erich opened a door, and they stepped into a large, airy room that opened into the garden. The two windows opposite were so shaded by the luxuriant foliage without, that at either end a soft green twilight pervaded the room, while between them the bright spring sunshine poured in at the widely opened door which afforded a view into the garden with its high vine-clad walls and round flower beds bordered by close-cut hedges of box, and divided by a broad straight path that led to the lake, inviting

[1] The climate in Germany is not warm enough to ripen peaches and apricots, unless the trees are raised on a southern exposure and trained against a wall for warmth and protection. — TRANSLATOR.

the eye to follow it to the water's edge and then wander on to the wood-clad shores beyond. As the two friends stepped into the room the breeze through the open door brought to them all the fragrance of the garden.

On the terrace in front of the door they saw a slender, girlish figure clad in white. It was Elisabeth. She rose and came to meet them, but after the first few steps stood as though rooted to the ground, her eyes fixed on the stranger. With a smile Reinhard held out his hand to her.

"Reinhard!" she cried. "You?" and then added: "It is a long time since we have seen each other."

"A long time," he repeated, and could find no other words; for at the sound of her voice he felt a sharp and actual pain at his heart, and as he looked up she stood before him the same sweet and graceful figure that he remembered so well as he had seen her last, years ago, when he had bade her good-by in the home of their childhood.

Erich had remained standing at the door, his face radiant with pleasure. "Well, Elisabeth," he said, "of all persons, he is the last one whom you would have expected to see; is it not so?"

Elisabeth's eyes met his in a glance of sisterly affection as she said: "You are so good, Erich."

He took her slender hand in both of his. "And now that we have him, we will not soon let him go again, will we?" he said. "He has been a wanderer for so long a time that we shall have to teach him to feel at home again in his native land. Just see how like a foreigner he looks and what an air of distinction he has."

For an instant Elisabeth's eyes were raised to Reinhard's face, then fell again.

"It is only the change that comes with years," he said.

Elisabeth's mother now appeared in the doorway, the housewife's bunch of keys in a little basket on her arm. "Why, Herr Werner!" she exclaimed, when she saw Reinhard, "this is as welcome a visit as it is unexpected." And now, with the many questions that were to be asked, and answers to be given, the conversation ran smoothly on. The ladies had taken up their needlework again, and while Reinhard was partaking of the luncheon that had been prepared for him, Erich brought forth his huge meerschaum and was now sitting beside him, blowing great puffs of smoke as he talked.

The next morning Erich conducted his friend over the estate to show him his broad, well-planted acres, the vineyards, the hop-garden, and the distillery. Everything was in excellent order, and the people at work in the fields or at the great vats, all had a contented and well-fed look.

For dinner the family assembled in the pleasant room that opened upon the garden, and then more or less of the remaining part of the day was passed together according to the leisure of host and hostess. Only the first hours of the morning and the last one before the evening meal did Reinhard spend in his room, alone and at work.

For years, wherever he could find them, he had been collecting folk-songs and rhymes as they lived in the memory and hearts of the people, and he now set to work to put this carefully-gathered treasure in order, as well as to add to it, if possible, from the songs of the neighborhood.

Elisabeth was at all times sweet and gentle; Erich's

ever-mindful and loving attentions she accepted with an almost humble gratitude, and the thought often came to Reinhard that the gay and happy child of old had given promise of a less quiet woman.

After the second day of his visit Reinhard fell into the habit of taking a walk in the evening along the shore of the lake. The path followed close along the edge of the garden and ended on a projecting embankment where a bench had been placed under a group of tall birch trees. Elisabeth's mother had named it the "sunset seat," because the place looked toward the west and was most sought after at that time of day to get a view of the setting sun.

One evening Reinhard was returning from his walk by this path when he was overtaken by a sudden shower. He sought shelter under the broad branches of a linden tree that grew at the water's edge; but soon the heavy drops came pattering down in spite of the thick foliage overhead. Thoroughly wet, he resigned himself to the inevitable, and slowly continued his homeward way. It was almost dark; the rain fell faster and faster. As he approached the sunset seat he thought he could discern the white-robed figure of a woman among the gleaming white trunks of the birch trees. She stood motionless, and as he came nearer, he thought her face was turned in his direction as though she were expecting some one. He believed it was Elisabeth; but when he hastened his steps to join her and return to the house with her by the shorter way of the garden, the figure turned slowly and disappeared in the darkness of the by-paths.

He could not understand it, and almost felt resentful toward Elisabeth, although he doubted that it really had been she; nevertheless he shrank from questioning her

about it, and on his return to the house even avoided going into the room that opened upon the garden lest he should enter just as Elisabeth returned to it by the garden door.

VIII.

MY MOTHER WILLED IT SO.

A FEW days later, toward evening, the family was as usual assembled in the favorite room. The door into the garden was thrown open; the sun had just disappeared behind the trees on the farther shore of the lake.

Reinhard was asked to read some of the folk-songs that a friend, who lived farther back in the country, had sent him that afternoon. He went to his room and soon returned with a roll of paper consisting of loose, neatly written pages.

The chairs were now drawn up to the table, Elisabeth taking the one beside Reinhard. "We will have to read at random," he said, "for I have not had time to look them over."

Elisabeth unrolled the manuscript. "Here are some set to music," she said; "you must sing them, Reinhard."

First came a number of Tyrolese Schnaderhüpferl;[1] as Reinhard read them, he occasionally sang one of the lively melodies in a low voice, and soon the little company was in gay spirits.

"But who makes all these pretty songs?" exclaimed Elisabeth.

"Oh!" said Erich, "that is easily guessed from the very nature of the songs themselves — tailor lads and

[1] A style of folk-song common in the Swiss and Tyrolese Alps. It is a merry, bantering rhyme usually sung to the accompaniment of the zither. The singer often composes it on the spur of the moment in answer to another. — TRANSLATOR.

barber apprentices and other such careless and merry folk."

"They are not made at all," said Reinhard; "they grow, they drop from the sky, they are wafted over the land like thistle-down; hither and thither they fly, and are sung by a thousand voices in a thousand places at the same time. Our own inmost thoughts and sufferings are revealed to us in these songs, and it almost seems as though we had all had a share in them."

He took up another sheet and read: "I stood on lofty mountain" —

"Oh! I know that one," said Elizabeth. "Begin it, Reinhard, and I will sing it with you."

Then they sang the familiar melody — a melody so mysterious and weird that it is hard to believe that it could have sprung from the mind of man, Elisabeth with her low alto singing second to Reinhard's tenor.

The mother, meanwhile, was busy with her sewing, and Erich sat with folded hands, listening attentively. When the song was ended Reinhard laid the sheet aside without a word. From the shore of the lake, through the stillness of the evening, came the sound of herd-bells; involuntarily they all listened, when suddenly a clear, boyish voice rang out: —

"I stood on lofty mountain
And gazed into the vale ——"

Reinhard smiled. "Do you hear it?" he said. "So they go from mouth to mouth."

"It is often sung in this neighborhood," said Elisabeth.

"Yes," said Erich, "it is Kaspar, the herd-boy, driving the milch cows home."

They listened a while longer until the tinkling of the bells ceased behind the farm buildings.

"These melodies are nature's own," said Reinhard; "they are born in the depth of the forest, and no one can say who it is that finds and wakes them."

He took the next sheet.

It was growing dusk; on the tops of the trees on the farther shore of the lake lay a shimmer of red, like foam on the crest of the wave. Reinhard unrolled the sheet, and Elisabeth laid her hand on one corner to steady it; then both bent over it as Reinhard read: —

"My love I should forego,
My mother willed it so.
What my heart had once possessed,
Never more should he confessed;
It would not have it so.

"Let the blame on mother rest,
For she willed not what was best;
All that fairest might have been
Now has turned to darkest sin.
Ah, would that I had rest!

"What was once my joy and pride
Now in grief and shame I hide.
Ah, me, if it were not so
Gladly would I begging go
Through the world so wide."

While he was reading Reinhard had noticed a slight trembling of the paper; when he had ended, Elisabeth rose, and without a word quietly set her chair aside and went into the garden. Her mother's eyes followed her, and as Erich rose to join her the mother detained him,

saying that Elisabeth had a number of little duties to attend to in the garden, and so he remained.

Softly the evening shadows fell on garden and lake, and grew deeper and deeper; now and then, with a whirring noise, a great moth flashed past the open door through which the fragrance of bush and flower was wafted in, growing stronger with the deepening night; from down by the lake came the sound of the frogs, while on a tree close by the window a nightingale began her evening song, soon followed by another within the denser shadows of the garden. Slowly the moon rose over the farthest treetops.

Reinhard's eyes rested long on the place where Elisabeth's slender figure had disappeared among the foliage of one of the by-paths; then, rolling up his manuscript, he bade the others good-night, and passing through the house walked down to the lake.

The trees stood motionless and silent, casting their dark shadows far out over the water, while beyond, toward the middle of the lake, its unruffled surface gleamed in the faint moonlight. Now and then the trees stirred with a soft rustling sound, but there was no wind; it was only the sobbing breath of the summer night. Reinhard followed the edge of the lake. A stone's throw out from the shore he saw a white water-lily floating on the surface. He felt a sudden desire to hold it in his hand, and quickly throwing aside his clothes he stepped into the water. It was very shallow, and thorny plants and sharp pebbles hurt his feet as he walked farther out into the lake but still did not find sufficient depth to swim. Then suddenly the bottom was gone from under him; in swirls and eddies the dark water closed in above him, and it was some time before he came to the surface. Then, with hands and feet, he struck out and swam about

in a circle until he had located the place where he had entered the water. Soon he discovered the lily also; white and lonely it floated among its great dark leaves. Slowly he swam toward it, now and then lifting his arms out of the water to watch the drops sparkle in the moonlight as they fell back into the lake. But he seemed to come no nearer to the flower, although the shore had receded more and more into the dim distance every time that he glanced back at it.

He would not abandon his undertaking, however, but swam on vigorously in the same direction. At last he was so near the flower that he could distinguish each silvery petal as it glistened in the moonlight, but at the same moment he felt himself entangled in a network of the smooth, swaying stems that reached up from the bottom of the lake, and had twined themselves about his naked limbs. The unfamiliar sheet of water stretched in inky blackness all around him; behind him he heard the splash of a leaping fish. Suddenly he was seized with such a dread of the treacherous element about him that, with an effort, he tore himself loose from the entangling stems and in breathless haste swam back to the shore. When he had reached it he looked back at the lily which floated on the black water as lonely and distant as before.

He dressed himself and slowly returned to the house. Here he found Erich and the mother engaged in preparations for a short journey which had to be undertaken in the morning.

"Why, where have you been so late at night?" the mother exclaimed as he entered.

"I? Oh, I wanted to make friends with the water-lily, but I did n't succeed."

"Now, what do you mean by that, you strange fellow?" said Erich. "What under the sun did you want with the water-lily?"

"Oh, the water-lily and I were good friends once," was Reinhard's answer; "but that was long ago."

IX.

ELISABETH.

THE following afternoon found Reinhard and Elisabeth wandering along the farther shore of the lake, at times keeping close to the water's edge, at others roaming farther away into the woods. Elisabeth had been commissioned by Erich during his absence to show Reinhard all the prettiest views of the vicinity, and these were principally to be found on the other side of the lake, looking toward the house. The two were now going from one point to another; at last Elisabeth grew weary, and sat down to rest in the shade of some overhanging boughs, while Reinhard stood at a little distance leaning against the trunk of a tree; as he looked at her the call of a cuckoo came to them from farther back in the woods. Reinhard had a sudden feeling that all this had been so once before; with a sad smile he said: "Shall we look for strawberries, Elisabeth?"

"This is not the time for strawberries," was her answer.

"But it will be, soon," he said.

Elisabeth shook her head; without a word she rose, and they continued on their way. As they wandered on, side by side, his eyes were drawn to her again and again, for she was so graceful and light of step. At times he unconsciously fell back a step or two that he might have her before him as he walked. Soon they came to an open space where they could look far away into the dis-

tance and where the ground was overgrown with a low heath. Reinhard stooped to break one of the little plants at his feet, and when he raised himself and turned to Elisabeth, his face wore a look of bitter anguish.

"Do you know this flower?" he asked.

She looked at him questioningly. "It is an Erica," she answered. "I have often found them in the woods."

"At home," said Reinhard, "I have an old book in which I used to write all sorts of rhymes and poems, but it is a long time now since I have opened it. Between its pages lies an Erica, but it is withered and brown. Do you know who placed it there?"

Elisabeth nodded, but did not speak; her eyes fell and rested on the little plant he held in his hand. So they stood for some time; at last Elisabeth raised her eyes, and then he saw that they were wet with tears.

"Elisabeth," he said, "behind yonder blue mountains lies all the joy of our youth. What has become of it?"

They said no more, but in silence went on together to the shore of the lake. The air was sultry and heavy; on the western horizon dark clouds were rising. "We are going to have a storm," said Elisabeth, and hastened her steps. Reinhard nodded, and without a word they hurried on along the water's edge until they reached the place where their boat lay moored.

While they crossed the water Elisabeth sat with her hand resting on the rim of the boat. As he rowed, Reinhard glanced over at her, but she was looking past him into the distance beyond, and so his eyes wandered down from her face and rested on her hand; and what the quiet face had refused to reveal the white hand betrayed to him. He saw upon it those faint lines that suffering traces on the fair hands of women if at night they lie

crossed over an aching heart. Slowly the slender hand slipped down into the water as Elisabeth became conscious of the look that rested on it.

When they arrived at the house they saw a scissors-grinder's cart standing before it. A man with long, curly black hair was busily turning the wheel with his foot, while he hummed a gypsy melody; at his side, panting with heat and fatigue, lay the dog that was harnessed to the cart. In the doorway, clothed in rags, stood a young woman whose dark and once beautiful features were marred by lines of sin and suffering. At Elisabeth's approach she held out her hand for alms. Reinhard thrust his hand into his pocket, but Elisabeth anticipated him and emptied the entire contents of her purse into the girl's outstretched palm. Then she turned quickly and Reinhard heard a sob as she hurried up the stairs. He followed, and would have detained her, but stopped and turned back at the foot of the stairs.

The gypsy woman still stood in the doorway, her eyes fixed on the money in her hand. "What more do you want?" asked Reinhard. At the sound of his voice she started. "Nothing, nothing more," she said; then, with her face turned toward him and her wild eyes riveted on his, she slowly left the house. He spoke a name, but she did not hear him; with bowed head, and hands crossed over her bosom, she followed the man and the cart.

> "Too soon I must die,
> And die alone."

The old song rang in Reinhard's ears; he caught his breath, and stood a moment longer, then he turned and went to his room.

There he sat down to his work, but he could not fix his mind upon it. After an hour's fruitless endeavor he went downstairs and into the living-room. There was no one there; the room was pervaded by the usual cool, green twilight; on Elisabeth's sewing-table lay the red ribbon she had worn that afternoon. He picked it up, but laid it down again, for its touch hurt him. He felt restless and went down to the water; there he unfastened the boat and pushed out into the lake. He rowed across to the other shore and went again to all the places that he and Elisabeth had visited together only a few hours before.

When he returned to the house it had grown dark; on the way he met the coachman taking the carriage horses to the pasture; the travellers had just come home. As he entered the hall he heard Erich's footstep in the living-room, but he did not join him; after a moment's hesitation he turned and went softly up the stairs to his room. There he seated himself in an armchair by the window; he tried to believe that he was listening to the nightingale singing in one of the hedges down in the garden, but he heard only the beating of his own heart. Below stairs in the house the familiar sounds gradually ceased and all was still; the hours passed, but he did not heed them. Thus he sat the whole night long; at last he rose and leaned far out of the window. The dew was dripping from the foliage; the nightingale's song was hushed; gradually a faint glimmer of light came into the eastern horizon and the darkness of night gave way to the dawning day. A fresh breeze sprang up and fanned Reinhard's hot forehead; a lark rose in the air, singing its jubilant song.

Suddenly Reinhard turned and stepping to the table felt about on it for a pencil; when he had found it he

sat down and wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper. As soon as he had finished he took his hat and cane and, leaving the paper on the table, softly opened the door and went downstairs.

In all the corners the dark shadows still lingered; the great house-cat lay stretching itself on the straw mat; it rose at Reinhard's approach and arching its back rubbed itself against his hand which quite unconsciously he held out to it. Without, in the garden, the sparrows were at their matins in every bush and tree, proclaiming to the world that the night was gone.

Now Reinhard heard a door opened somewhere in the house above him, then a step upon the stair; some one was coming down. He turned, and Elisabeth stood before him. She laid one hand on his arm; her lips moved, but no sound passed them. At last he heard her say: "You will never come back again. I know it; do not deny it. You will never come back."

"No, never," said Reinhard.

Her hand fell from his arm and she said no more. He crossed the hall to the door; there he turned to look at her once more. She was standing motionless just where he had left her, only her eyes followed him with a dull look of despair. He took one step toward her and held out his arms; then, with an effort, he turned and hurried out of the door.

Without, the world was bright with the fresh light of the young day; the pearling dewdrops hung on every cobweb and flashed in the first rays of the sun. Reinhard did not once turn to look back, but hastened on; farther and farther he left behind him the quiet house from which he had just passed, and before him lay the great wide world.

X.

THE OLD MAN.

The moonlight no longer fell in at the window, and it had grown quite dark; but the old man still sat in his armchair with his hands folded in his lap, gazing into the shadowy room before him. Gradually the familiar scene vanished, and in its place stretched the dark waters of a lake, one black wave after another rolling away before him into the gloomy distance, and on the last, so far away that he could scarce discern it, a white water-lily floated lonely among its broad dark leaves.

The door was opened and the bright light of a lamp fell into the room. "It is well that you have come, Brigitte," said the old man. "Set the lamp on the table, please."

Then he drew his chair closer to the table and, taking up one of the books that lay open upon it, he was soon absorbed in the study to which he had given all the strength of his youth.